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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 003542

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: IGOR IVANOV OUT AT SECURITY COUNCIL; VALENTIN
SOBOLEV A PLACEHOLDER?

REF: MOSCOW 3400 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells. Reasons: 1.4(B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) On July 18, President Putin accepted Security Council Secretary Igor Ivanov's resignation, which had been pending for several weeks (reftel). Ivanov first offered to resign in February, prompted largely by differences over Russia's relations with the West and concerns about the role of succession politics in Russia's foreign policy. The Kremlin announced that Deputy Valentin Sobolev would serve as Acting Secretary. Ivanov plans to teach at the Moscow Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) and write books.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Sobolev is a bureaucratic veteran with a background in the security organs who has served under Putin in several guises. Public sources indicate he joined the KGB in 1972 and climbed his way up to become Deputy Director of the successor Federal Security Service (FSB) in the mid-nineties. When Putin was FSB Director, Sobolev served as his First Deputy Director for about eight months in 1998-99. During a Yeltsin-inspired shakeup in spring of 1999, he moved over to the Security Council when Putin was appointed Council Secretary. While at the Council, he has kept a relatively low profile, and was the sole survivor of Igor Ivanov's 2004 housecleaning.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: As Acting Secretary, Sobolev will be responsible for coordinating Russian security policies, but we do not see him as a policy maker or view him as a contender for higher office. He strikes us as a loyal placeholder who enjoys Putin's confidence, but will not be as visible or active as Igor Ivanov. While speculation is rife, it is not clear when a permanent replacement will be named as Secretary or whether that move would be part of a broader

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government reshuffle.
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